

# 1997 WorkFirst Implementation Schedule

*The Republican-sponsored WorkFirst program moves Washington into a new era of public assistance services. Rather than helping families qualify for welfare, we will focus on helping them find jobs, economic self-sufficiency, and personal responsibility.*

*Since passage of this act during the 1997 session, the state Department of Social & Health Services has been working to restructure its services to accommodate the new direction. Unlike the old program, most WorkFirst clients will work directly with a single case manager who will guide them through the new program and direct them to available work-related services.*

*To follow is the implementation timeline for this ground-breaking new program:*

## **July 1**

- ✓ Parents delinquent on child support may face license suspension.
- ✓ DSHS starts new single system for child care services for public assistance and low-income working families.

## **August 1**

- ✓ Five-year lifetime limit starts.
- ✓ First phase of work search program begins.
- ✓ DSHS employs new case management system where clients are referred to services and offered alternatives to public assistance.
- ✓ Legal immigrants who are ineligible for federal benefits begin receiving state-funded aid.
- ✓ New resource limits encourage savings and more reliable transportation.
- ✓ WorkFirst participants may keep half of their job earnings before benefits are calculated.

## **September 1**

- ✓ Legal immigrants begin receiving state-funded food assistance.

## **October 1**

- ✓ Elderly or disabled legal immigrants, no longer eligible for federal disability benefits, begin receiving benefits through state General Assistance program.

## **November 1**

- ✓ Work search, work, or work-related activities become mandatory.
  - All recipients are required to work with limited exceptions.
  - Recipients face sanctions or loss of benefits for not meeting work requirements.
- ✓ Current welfare recipients start transition to WorkFirst.
- ✓ All participants develop Individual Responsibility Plans.
- ✓ Child care co-payments begin.
- ✓ One-year state residency is required before new residents may apply for aid.
- ✓ People may begin to receive one-time cash assistance to overcome short-term emergencies and avoid welfare dependency.
- ✓ Community jobs and subsidized private sector jobs become available.

***Businesses and other organizations interested in participating in WorkFirst partnerships may contact their local Job Service Centers or call the Employment Security Department at 1-888-734-WORK (9675).***